



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **House National Security Committee**

### **Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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#### **STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD D. SPENCE**

#### **OPEN HEARING**

#### **WITH REGIONAL COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF**

*March 4, 1998*

Today the committee begins two days of hearings with our regional commanders-in-chief. Today we will have with us:

- Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, commander-in-chief of U.S. Pacific Command;
- General John H. Tilelli, commander-in-chief of U.S. Forces Korea; and
- Admiral Harold W. Gehman, commander-in-chief of U.S. Atlantic Command.

Tomorrow we will hear from their colleagues at U.S. European Command and U.S. Central Command.

It comes as no surprise to our witnesses that we live in a complex and rapidly changing world. Global security in this “post-Cold-War era” has been affected most by the void created by the collapse of the Soviet empire and the drawdown of U.S. forces.

That is why I have written and spoken often about how the “ends” of U.S. national security strategy and the military “means” of achieving them are significantly out of balance. This reality, coupled with today’s balanced budget fiscal environment, has turned the national security debate into an argument - and one of increasing anxiety - about how best to manage risks instead of how best to protect U.S. national interests around the world.

No one understands this problem better than the CINCs – risk management is their day-to-day job. They increasingly have to worry about the status and adequacy of U.S. troops in theater and concern themselves with the implications of U.S. forces being diverted to some other crisis.

Our witnesses today face some daunting challenges. General Tilelli's troops still face a million-man North Korean force within striking distance of the Seoul. North Korea's economy may remain a basket case, yet somehow the military gets fed and ballistic missile programs continue to be developed - a source of constant surprise and uncertainty for our intelligence community and thus, for General Tilelli.

As he faces the DMZ, General Tilelli has concerns on his own side of the border as well. He recently acknowledged some of these concerns in a recent memo he sent arguing that the movement of forces to support the Persian Gulf crisis "places our ability to sustain defensive forces at very high risk." According to press accounts, the General's memo went on to say that "the combined shortfalls... will severely impact our ability to defend Seoul."

Admiral Prueher faces many of the same challenges, only on a wider scale. The challenges facing the Pacific Command are as widespread as the command's vast area of operations. China's ambitions remain, yet its future role in the region - cooperative or confrontational - is still an unknown. Adding to that uncertainty is the current financial crisis that affects much of East Asia - a crisis which carries with it very real possibilities for unrest and conflict. If East Asia is to remain politically and economically stable, America's role as guarantor of regional security is more important than it ever has been.

Yet in recent weeks, the shuttling of forces between the Pacific and the Persian Gulf has increased. During the 1996 Taiwan crisis, a carrier battle group redeployed from the Gulf to the Pacific. During the recent Iraq crisis, key Pacific Command forces were sent to the Gulf, including the only carrier deployed in the Western Pacific. When asked, the CNO, Admiral Johnson, will state that the Navy can maintain two carriers in the Persian Gulf indefinitely. As the CNO and others are quick to point out, however, the more meaningful question is how long the U.S. should be without a carrier in the Western Pacific or in the Mediterranean in order to maintain the current order of battle in the Gulf. It's a question of risk - serious risk in my opinion.

Admiral Gehman's horizons are broader still, for in addition to his role as regional commander-in-chief, he is the primary force provider to other CINCs. Indeed, the most accurate measurement of America's role in the world may well be the number of troops deployed from Atlantic Command. During the past year, Atlantic Command supported more than 20 major military operations and averaged over 40 vessels, 300 aircraft and 37,000 troops deployed every day of 1997.

In fact, each of our witnesses in his own way can testify to the demands of "doing more with less," which unfortunately has become standard operating procedure for our military today. But doing more with less, by definition, is a high risk policy.

Most Americans do not realize what is at stake - particularly in the Pacific - as we approach the 21st century. The mismatch between our strategy and our resources is not an "inside the Beltway" semantic debate. It means real risk on the front lines - military front lines and political front lines. Therefore, I hope our witnesses will describe clearly the challenges that confront them in their areas of responsibility and help us to better understand the risks and challenges we face around the world.